



**Written Testimony Supporting House Joint Resolution No. 2
Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee
Voting**

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Andrew Schneider and I am the Executive Director for the ACLU of Connecticut. I submit this testimony in support of House Joint Resolution No. 2, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting.

The right to vote, and to have one's vote accurately and fairly counted, is as fundamental a right as we have in this country. This resolution will make voting more convenient for those who otherwise have difficulty doing so.

Currently Connecticut law only allows for absentee voting under narrowly defined circumstances which serve as valid "excuses." If a citizen does not fall within one of the prescribed scenarios then they are prohibited from exercising their right to vote by the absentee ballot. This impediment to accessing the polls reduces the number of Americans who could vote and thus weakens our democracy.

Restrictive absentee voting laws disproportionately benefit those who have the means to vote at the polls because, for example, they are better able to afford child care, can afford to take time off from work, or less likely to work two jobs. Removing the absentee ballot excuse requirements would help to equalize the playing field for all voters-particularly the elderly, people with disabilities, low-income voters, students and minorities. Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia offer "no-excuse" absentee voting.¹

Implementation of no-excuse absentee voting would result in shorter poll lines on Election Day. Fewer voters on Election Day would ease the burden on elections officials because there are likely to be fewer machine breakdowns, fewer misdirected voters in need of attention, etc. We are pleased to see that Connecticut is recognizing the fundamental right to vote by making voting more convenient.

The ACLU of Connecticut supports this resolution and respectfully requests that this committee pass this important resolution this session.

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, Report on Absentee and Early Voting, updated Jul. 22, 2011, available at: <http://www.ncsl.org/LegislaturesElections/ElectionsCampaigns/AbsenteeandEarlyVoting/tabid/16604/Default.aspx#absent> (noting Arizona, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Vermont all had no-excuse absentee voting).